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# A GARGOYLE IN FLANDERS

BY THEDA KENYON

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When he who dared to dream of God's white face,  
And carve it into stone,  
Had finished, to surround his imagery,  
A choir of angels, singing tirelessly,  
And raised (as some new maker of high Heaven)  
The whole, within this place—  
The truer, baser nature of the man  
Longed for an earth form—and my life began. . . .

A bitter visaged gargoyle in a court  
Looking forever with one jaded eye  
Upon man's mad procession, passing by—  
Gathering new impressions, day by day,  
Storing them all away:  
A fragile treasury of dreams and tears,  
And gentle-winged hopes—and dark-eyed fears:  
I whisper them to sunbeams that caress  
My age-cramped, bent-limbed form;  
And rambling roses, reaching up to bless  
My grief, through sun and storm. . . .

And far beneath, I watched the Pilgrims pass,  
In penitential row;  
Their pale, pure candles pointing to the sky,  
Their meek eyes fixed upon the earth below—  
Their incense, veiling all in mystery,  
Offered to that hard-visaged marble God!

Then, when the little group had turned away,  
Their sabots clicking on the cobblestones  
In sharp rebuke to sunset silences—  
And the cold, lofty God whom they had praised  
Stared stonily, unmoved by their now fading mass. . . .

Then, I knew the crash of battle, and the beating of the drum,  
The screams of fallen wounded, and the high-flung Marseillaise,  
The prayers of men now dying—as they have died through the years,  
The daring of the desperate, and the hollow word of praise—

And that pale marble face we knew as God's  
Has fallen—crushed white marble—in the court;  
The bleak-eyed angels ceased their silent songs  
Long ere the last great Armageddon fought  
Should sink into the splendor of the day—  
And I—the lowliest of the company—  
Reign undisturbed, in ugly majesty.

Are there no Gods that dare outlive the glow  
Of sacrificial fire?  
The sunbeam answers no—  
Apollo and his cult passed long ago—  
And thus the dim array of lesser Gods must go.

But wait—lo, reaching higher,  
The Rambler roses blow,  
Their thorns a-tremble as they dare aspire,  
And, blood-red drops on the grey wall, they grow  
In crimson splendor like a living pyre—  
They hear the poppies in the fields below,  
Chanting in tireless ecstasy, and so  
Though the most transient children of Desire,  
They plumb the mysteries we tirelessly admire,  
And in their moment's life, they dare—to know!

For a new company throngs through the place—  
A stranger group, with bodies maimed like mine—  
But their deep eyes are lit with light divine,  
Their shattered limbs quiver with new-found grace;  
And Holiness now steals within the court,  
Soft-footed as a young girl's twilit prayer—  
And wraps the reverent-headed company  
In deep benevolent blessing, kneeling there!

THEDA KENYON.